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ONE WAY OF GOVERNING MALAYS.

BY ELIZABETH WASHBURN WRIGHT.

THE Federated Malay States represent as complete a bit of executive mechanism as Great Britain or any nation may to-day boast of. There are four of them—Perak, Pahang, Selangor and Negri Sembilan. They are touched in the north by four much-disputed states partially protected by Siam, and reach in the south to Johore and Singapore, which is the southernmost point of the Asiatic continent and misses the equator by a hair's breadth.

Johore is the one and only Malay state governed by its native head. It is, however, protected by Great Britain and submits its external policy to British supervision. Otherwise it holds an unique position of independence in the Peninsula. Singapore is on a tiny island separated from Johore and the mainland by a narrow strait.

On one side of the Peninsula stretch the Straits of Malacca, and on the other is the big wash of the China Sea. Malay, therefore, lies half-way between Ceylon and Hong-Kong, and within easy reach of that fragrant bunch of islands, Sumatra, Java, Borneo and the lesser islets of the Archipelago.

Singapore was bought as a personal venture by Stamford Raffles in 1819, and it is to-day the coaling-station and calling-port of all the traffic that rides on Eastern seas. It is as well a formidable stronghold in case of war. Besides this, it is the chief and executive centre of the detached British colonies that dot the Straits of Malacca. There are five of these—a united Crown Colony, once forming an Indian Presidency, but at present owing allegiance to their Governor in Singapore and to the Colonial Secretary in London.

North of Singapore and nearest it in point of distance is Malacca, a quaint and historic town which has passed through

a picturesque and varied occupancy. Originally seized by the Portuguese in 1511, it was taken from them by the Dutch some hundred years later. This was followed in the next century by a temporary settlement by the English, who surrendered it again to Holland in 1808. Five years later, it passed finally into the keeping of Great Britain, who gave the Dutch in exchange the valuable and then unexplored island of Sumatra.

Two hundred miles farther up the coast lies a cluster of beautiful but practically uninhabited islands called the Dindings. These islands were the last acquisition of the Straits Settlements, having been taken in 1873 by the government in Singapore on the outbreak of the Malay disturbances.

The next of these colonies, the farthest north, is the island and town of Penang, or properly speaking Georgetown. This territory was bought and settled in the latter part of the eighteenth century in the interest of the East India Company. On the mainland directly opposite Penang is Wellesley Province, a narrow tract of rice-fields bordering the Straits. Here the so-called and badly called Straits Settlements end; Singapore, Malacca, Dindings, Penang and Wellesley Province—five pearls, as it were, on a broken string.

Practically all the steps leading to the acquirement of these detached territories were due to the personal energy and initiative of a few individuals, without the sanction or knowledge of the country for whose aggrandizement the work was being done. But common interests and common enemies gradually drew the little settlements together and brought them to the notice of Great Britain, who promptly amalgamated them and took them under her wing.

Their growth and government are well worthy of study. But in this paper I can only touch on their institutions as related to the government of the Malay States. This connection lies in the fact that the Governor of the Straits Settlements is also High Commissioner for the Protected Malay States. In this capacity, he has a voice in their external policy and in all matters not strictly confined within the jurisdiction of their Resident General. He likewise has power to reject or modify papers before submitting them to the Colonial Secretary, whose potter's thumb must give the final imprint to all clay from colonial kilns.

Here we cease finally with the marginal influences of the Malay

States, and now for the States themselves. Thirty-odd years ago they were disorderly, disorganized provinces under the rule, or misrule, of native rajahs or chiefs. These Malays were fishermen, hunters, pirates and despoilers of one another's peace and provinces. They carried their differences up and down their long rivers or confined them with slaughterous results within their tiny kampongs or villages. Again, banding together, they attacked unwary craft that ventured too near their shores.

They were in fierce and constant friction with the Chinese, who, led by the rumors of rich minerals in the Peninsula, had broken into their stronghold. Knowledge of the ferocity of these encounters, and of the general state of distraction existing amongst the Malays themselves, occasionally drifted to the outside world. These rumors had from time immemorial frightened away all would-be invaders. The undesirability of forcing a more accurate acquaintanceship was further discouraged by the British authorities in Singapore, who warned all subjects that they ventured into the unknown territory at their own risk.

This enforced seclusion gave unlimited swing to the Malays, and kept intact till the time of British interference an almost prehistoric and brutal condition of life. The long-delayed intervention took place in 1873, when the internal distraction in the native territory reached its limits and burst into open rupture on the seacoast. The Chinese were preying on the Malays, and the Malays to the best of their ability were retaliating. The native sultans were at loggerheads with one another, and totally unable to control or direct their turbulent and disorderly subjects.

This warfare was carried to the coast, and there it became an open menace to commerce and to all traffic passing through the Straits. Then at last, in self-defence, the Government in Singapore was told to interfere. The result was the appearance of a British man-of-war in the tumultuous waters, and, after a violent collision and some loss of life, steps were taken toward the conclusion of a treaty and overtures were made for a better understanding. This ended in the British occupation of the Dindings, the chief rendezvous of these lawless folk. Here Great Britain was able to check and finally abolish their dangerous practices.

Negotiations were opened at the same time with various native

chiefs. Finally, at the invitation of the Sultan of Perak, who was tired of the internal turmoil, a quasi-administrative, quasi-commercial officer was established in that state, with the somewhat ambiguous title of Resident.

There follows a perplexing, unpleasant page of history. Confusing mists fortunately surround the actual facts. But to Great Britain the reading was plain enough. Her official representative had been brutally murdered and that death was to be avenged. And it was. Reparation was demanded and grudgingly granted. The circumstance sealed the fate of the Malays. Great Britain was behind her cannon, and there she was to remain.

The curious and venturesome who had long desired to explore the forbidden provinces now pushed forward, and the gate has never since been closed. They came as the flotsam and jetsam of restless life that washes from one pole to the other, as individuals and in groups, as fortune-hunters drawn by the persistent rumors of gold and as the law-breaker seeking shelter. As young, untried men they came, to whom adventure is as the breath of their nostrils and the breaking of virgin soil a delight which through all ages has set young pulses throbbing. Finally, they came in little bands that Government sent out—raw, untried cadets and earnest, energetic men, who were entrusted with a great lump of unmoulded clay and told to set to work. Some were appalled and turned the ball helplessly from hand to hand, knowing no design. Others grew weary with the unwonted weight and threw away the clay. Others again took the raw matter in hand and toiled soberly and unceasingly upon it, and finally traced out a design that thought and keen observation told them was the appropriate one. To-day this pattern stands elaborated in an unique system of government, that calls other men and nations with like work before them to stop and study.

This rough clay, some thirty years ago, lay in an unmapped, unknown, impassable country. The task of moulding it required years of hardship and discouragements, and all the effort that lies between barbarism and the attainment of what the world to-day calls civilization. It meant the drawing of maps, the building of roads, the placing of villages, the tracing of rivers, all the details and equipment that go hand in hand with a modern civilization. It meant, more accurately, an endless, intolerable struggle with a thousand-limbed jungle, that took ten steps to

man's one. It meant fighting one's way foot by foot over the new land, through forest, mire and mangrove swamp. It meant frightful days of exposure in native canoes on steaming, rank rivers that wound and rewound their tortuous courses, and led into native hostile camps. It meant days and weeks and months of loneliness and despair, being scorched by a relentless sun, chilled by sudden drenching rains, threatened by natives, sickened by improper food, weakened by fever, maddened by solitude and disheartened by the daily onslaught of ever-new discouragements. Finally, it meant self-sacrifice and suffering and effacement in behalf of a nation that knew little of the land, and took no heed of the valiant vigilance of her sons to uphold her standards in an unwilling soil.

The time of this struggle seemed to the weary workmen endless in its passage, but to the observer of to-day it appears to have been incredibly swift. In less than twenty years the jungle was forced back and paths cut through it. The rivers were bridged, the mountains scaled and small settlements of Europeans sprang simultaneously into being. A tiny executive was established, and the tortuous process of gaining the confidence of the natives terminated in success.

To-day the task is practically finished, and the Malay States stand a body organized, nominally under rulers calling themselves "sultans"; but the mind and the might are Great Britain's, and the hand at the helm is a white one. It is an unique situation, involving alike the most delicate tact and masterful assertion, for the finished work stands openly not to the credit of Great Britain, but to the credit of the ignorant, indolent sultans, whose native impulse disapproves all progress, yet whose seal makes it not only possible, but compulsory.

For all practical purposes, the States follow the Civil Service code as used in the neighboring colonies, changed where necessary to fit her different needs. They each have their Resident, their District Officers, their Secretariat of English officials and English trained cadets, their magistrates and judicial corps.

Each state has its Surgeon, its District Surgeon, its hospitals and Medical Staff, a Public Works Department, a State Engineer, a Resident Railway Engineer, a Post and Telegraph Department, a Forestry Department and semi-government schools, orphanages and establishments for the destitute. These were the original

departments in the various States, or rather the final evolution of the needs of the administration in the separate States.

In 1896 the four States were federated, with their capital in Kwala Lumpor, the chief town of Selangor. Since then has taken place a general movement towards centralization. This departure threatens the sovereignty of the Residents, and tends to merge all power eventually in the hands of the Resident General, who is to-day responsible for the wider policy of the government, and to whom all questions not purely local must be referred.

Federation has also brought about unification in lesser spheres. A federal officer now controls the Public Works Department, and another the railway system throughout the four States. The tendency is for other departments to follow suit, thus simplifying the present laborious system of correspondence, which clogs the wheels of government and prevents speedy action. More essentially, it tends to bring all heads of departments into closer union and sympathy, and makes it possible to carry out a more unified system of government throughout the States. The posts of Judicial Commissioner and Legal Adviser were federal at the time of their establishment, likewise the Commissioner of Police, the Chinese Secretary, and more recently a Department for Medical Research has been established under the guidance of a specialist. The military, or Malay States Guides, is of necessity a federal organization formed of Sikh soldiers and English officers, with a Lieutenant-Colonel at their head.

All the important arteries of administration are officered and controlled by Great Britain; but the so-called and actual executive heads are to be found in the various State Councils, at which the native sultans and their chief headmen sit jointly with the British Resident, with the additional presence in the larger States of a Chinese representative, who watches the interests of the ever-increasing population of his countrymen. At this board, the revenue and expenditure of the State are discussed and new measures of policy decided upon. The exact position of the Resident, and in turn that of the British Government, are here demonstrated. It is nominally that of Adviser, the post of a practically disinterested spectator who proffers advice and suggests adequate measures that will insure its adoption.

To all intents and purposes, it is the sultan only who rules

and who ordains. The British Resident and his staff of assistant officials are, in the legal writing, but foreign hirelings in the service of the various sultans of Malaya.

The theoretical rôle of these Malay sultans is no mean one, nor would the provinces under their rule take an inferior place beside other civilized communities. But, as a matter of fact, and as is obvious to the most casual observer, the sultan carries but little, if any, weight beyond the outward lettering. He and his chiefs are allowed ostentatious seats at the Councils, and have a voice in petty local government. Here their power ceases, but the local glory attached to these offices seems to suffice, with occasional recognition from Great Britain herself, who has meted out orders and distinctions to these obsolete rulers in ratio according to their intelligent acceptance of the imposed authority.

So the Malay sultan to-day is but the sorry figurehead of a race that never in any way showed itself capable or desirous of bettering its material position or of placing itself morally in a higher status of civilization.

It must be added to the credit of Great Britain that she has shown in every way respect and consideration for these nominal heads, and, where it has been practicable, compliance in furthering their desires. To-day these effete royalties are better housed and salaried, and assured of greater personal peace and security, than was ever their fortune in the palmiest days of their independent reigns.

Whether this unique system of assisting an incompetent people to rule themselves, to literally hold the sceptre in their hands, would with a different race work as satisfactorily, is a difficult thing to say.

This particular system in this particular case has worked to a charm, and has undoubtedly solved many of the problems upon which white men have come to grief in their management of inferior races. This has been largely and obviously due to tact, justice and respect for that fundamental and essential law of treating Orientals from their own point of view, or as near it as the Westerner can safely and honestly approach. It has meant tolerance in religion, leniency in law and, above all things, unfaltering patience in the effort to grasp their childlike and often dense conceptions.

Since the disturbances in Pahang in 1891, the Malay has ceased

to resist British influences. He has proved a particularly passive model, now that he is actually subdued and conscious of the fact that British rule is working for his good and prosperity. The Malay Peninsula has undoubtedly been his camping-ground for centuries since his exodus from Sumatra, if any one knows when that took place. Here he has fished and fought, obstructed so far as lay in his power the advance of civilization, and reserved for himself and his heirs a broad hunting-ground and battle-field.

But to that civilization which represents the forward march of the crudest folk the Malays have added little. Nor have they left a single definite trace of race imagination or intelligence. There exist to-day no ruins, no relics, no remnants that would show an endeavor to beautify the land or to gratify their imagination by outward expression.

They have no architecture, no literature, no art in its wide significance; little, in fact, to distinguish their habitation of the Peninsula from that of the rudest root-eating aborigines. Yet their personalities would belie this assertion, for they are both proud and sensitive, showing courtesy and consideration if properly treated, and an obvious appreciation of it. Otherwise, they are sullen, silent, indolent, utterly immoral or unmoral, with a lively capacity for intrigue and deception.

At some time of their career Mohammedanism was introduced amongst them by wandering Arabs. This has become deeply interwoven with their native nature-worship and demonology. It is a question if this later phase of religion plays more than a minor part in their lives, Mohammedanism being to them at best but a system of outward forms, which they observe or not, as their moods or natures dictate. Superstitious to a childlike degree, they in their hearts undoubtedly cling to their instinctive belief in magic and malicious demons, and when Mohammedanism fails to solace they return to the elaborate rites and ceremonies that are supposed to propitiate these evil spirits.

With the introduction of Mohammedanism came a written language. So little have they taken advantage of this means of expression, however, or so little have they to express, that their only tribute to literature lies in a handful of fantastic, dully recorded fairy-tales, lacking in humor, in imagination, in style. Yet in verbal legend and folk-lore they are most prolific.

But art itself, the substance and body of spiritual or intellectual expression, they have disregarded or have not been able to approach. Their tribute is the very fringe and finish of a nation's utterance. There seem to have been no beginnings, no early crudities striving to explain themselves, no evolution to an ideal, but simply a detached and finished fragment. Delicate, fanciful woman's work it is, wonderfully fine in form and design, but woefully scant and unsatisfactory in its scope—boxes, bowls, buttons of precious metals cleverly chased, exquisitely chiselled, unique and original in conception and all within the rigid restrictions of Mohammedanism; yet within these narrow lines amazingly rich and resourceful, delicate tracery like lace and simple graceful forms that older, subtler, sounder races may try long in vain to equal or surpass—but it is their all, this, and the weaving of their sarongs, and the smelting of their murderous krises that run swiftly to a man's heart like a flash of crinkled lightning. Here they begin and end—indolent, melancholy, quick to take offence, sure to take revenge.

It may be that the land has overwhelmed them with its own abundant vitality; has overcome, absorbed, swept with a wide hand all trace of man's life from the land. It is a fiercely encroaching, appalling force, beside which the little animation of man becomes an abject thing. Howbeit, there are no men, no things in the Malay Peninsula—only a stupendous, prolific nature, to be feared, and revered and worshipped as the spell is upon it. So to-day the Malay sits paralyzed beneath this touch and drowns through the long sun hours, while the Chinaman is up and doing, the Tamil is at his slave work, and all men are helping themselves from the fulness of his land. Content with a tiny patch of paddy, a cluster of cocoanut or plantain trees, he stubbornly resists all offers, all incentives that the Government may urge to stir him into life. Firmly, philosophically he sits upon his stoop calmly chewing betel, while the power of the land is passing irrevocably from his hand.

But the Chinaman is here and here to stay. He tills the soil and digs the tin; draws the rickshaw and runs the shops; opens the opium dens and pays to Government a huge revenue for his gambling farms. He sits at the State Council, is interpreter, is clerk, is innkeeper, is table-boy, is everywhere—industrious, inscrutable, quick to learn, quick to take advantage of his new

knowledge. He is fairly clean, comparatively honest, and in twenty years rises from a coolie digging tin to a towkay handling millions.

The low-caste Tamil follows at a slower pace, does the refuse work of the Peninsula, lays its roads, opens its quarries, works in gangs on coffee estates, performs the menial work of railways and offices. In the towns he plays the rôle of money-lender, rising occasionally to a sphere of some importance.

There is besides a varied host of Sikhs and Bengalis, of Singha-
lese and Siamese and a smattering of peoples from the neighboring islands of the Archipelago. All these labor in more or less degree towards some end, while the Malay only is fixed in idleness.

To-day this beautiful country of his is open from end to end and sea to sea, ripe and ready for earnest work. Wide roads wind through the forests, whose giant trees hold in their grasp great ferns the size of men. Roots and ropes and mammoth vines dangle earthwards, and clinging to the mighty trunks the jungle orchid bursts into fragrant, fragile bloom.

Up the middle of the Peninsula bristles a range of mountains, and in their high passes the forests tower hundreds of feet above one's head; and before one the hills rise shoulder above shoulder till they vanish in blue mists. On these summits the nights and early mornings are dipped in icy dews, and the breath from the singing jungle is cold and weighted with the fragrance of spices and the heavy perfume of unseen flowers bursting in rank bloom.

The country rolls from beach to valley, and from valley to hill and once more to valley, and so adapts itself alike to the wants of planter and miner. Cocoanut-trees plume and drop their heavy fruit in every village, and groves of plantains flap and flower continuously. Coffee and rubber cover acres of ground, and in the valleys and on the gentle sloping hillsides is a constant ripple of tender green that marks the sprouting rice. In the soft silt of the lowlands, and in blighted barren river-beds, the tin is washed and sifted from the sand. It is this mineral that gives the Government its huge revenue and makes its full coffers the envy of the less wealthy colonies. Tons of tin pour out of the country daily, and are borne to Singapore and Penang for transshipment. There has just been finished a railway line which runs from

Singapore straight through the Peninsula to a port on the sea-coast opposite Penang, and so taps the rich country at every point.

It is unique, this little government; but, strangely enough, it is most inadequately known or appreciated by its home Government. It represents, in its finality, the uncertain, unencouraged, unidentified work of a host, many of whom have sickened and died by the way and laid down their tools, and their names have vanished. But the work remains.

Such is the pathetic fate of the pioneers, the outriders of a nation, who build up their empire like the coral reefs of the Pacific—a pitiful, powerful example of self-renunciation; and of all men to whom praise and justice should be meted out, it is to these willing exiles, who have given up their white man's birth-right for a life of solitude and toil. Their failure is often pitiful; their loss of standard and ideal heartrending. But the fact stands that, despite the heaviest obstacles laid across men's paths, work has been accomplished, is being accomplished and a higher grade of civilization raised in this distant quarter of the globe.

It is such work as this that our American Government in the Philippines is doing to-day. Our system is different from that of Great Britain, and the problem before us is a much more difficult one. Though the Filipinos are largely of this same Malay stock, the question has been greatly complicated by the infusion of other races and by a two-centuries' background of Christianity and European influences.

Nevertheless the fundamentals remain the same, for the East is ever the East, and different,—and involves under whatever flag or system the same sympathy and patience and hard work.

It only remains for generous governments to smooth, so far as possible, the paths of these their standard-bearers, and for the individuals who sit at home and point with pride to the tiny checks on the map that bear their colors, to reckon seriously the price of these few inches—the hardships, the sacrifices, the despairs that have gone to swell them.

ELIZABETH WASHBURN WRIGHT.